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AN INDIVIDUAL APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF UNITED STATES HISTORY.

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THIS DOCUMENT EXPLAINS THE INDIVIDUAL APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF UNITED STATES HISTORY TO EIGHTH GRADERS AT MEEKER, COLORADO. THE PROGRAM IS STRUCTURED SO THAT AFTER A STUDENT DEMONSTRATES MASTERY OF A CHAPTER THROUGH A SHORT OBJECTIVE TEST, HE THEN INVESTIGATES ENRICHMENT MATERIALS SUCH AS FILMSTRIPS, TAPES, RECORDS, BOOKS, AND PICTURE ENCYCLOPEDIAS. A DISCUSSION IS PRESENTED RELATING TO THE PURPOSES, PROCEDURES, AND RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS IS SUPPLEMENTED BY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DRAWN FROM THE PROGRAM. THE APPENDIX CONTAINS A LIST OF EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS USED. (JH)

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COLORADO WESTERN STATES SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

DOCUMENTATION

AN INDIVIDUAL APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF UNITED STATES HISTORY

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Meeker, Colorado
1963 - 64

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COMMISSIONER

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THE WESTERN STATES SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

The Western States Small Schools Project, partly financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation, is designed to help the state education agencies in Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah in their efforts to improve instruction in the necessarily existent small schools. The Project began January, 1961 and will end August, 1965. Policy Board of the Project is composed of the chief state school officers of the cooperating states. Ralph G. Bohrson, Coordinator of the WSSSP, is headquartered in Denver, at the Colorado State Department of Education.

The Colorado portion of the Project, involving more than two hundred teachers and administrators in approximately thirty schools has been working in the following areas:

-- Ungraded or Continuous Progress Programs

-- Use of Self-Instructional Materials

-- Teacher Education and In-Service Programs

-- Institutes for Rural School Board Members

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INTRODUCTION

The traditional method of teaching United States History is to assign a chapter or part of a chapter, the student reads the assignment, the teacher lectures and discusses; all this is followed by recitation and testing. This method leaves few opportunities for the student to develop any particular area of interest.

The writer found that many potentially good students did only the assigned work and showed an attitude of boredom toward United States History. The teacher felt that a different approach should be used so that all students could progress at their own speed and develop the area of special interest.

Limitations of the Study

The study which was conducted from January of 1963 to the spring of 1964 had several limitations:

(1) New study habits had to be developed by the students.

(2) Materials such as filmstrips, records, and supplementary reading had to be organized for each unit.

(3) Since United States History is taught only one year in the junior high school, the measuring instruments used only tested a period of eight months with each group.

Purpose of the Study

The two eighth grade sections of United States History that the writer teaches are grouped heterogeneously. Because of the grouping there exists a wide range of interest and ability. Some students will find one chapter more interesting than another chapter and would like to learn more about that particular period of history. When this situation arises, other learning mediums such as filmstrips, records, tapes, encyclopedias, and discussion groups are used.

Objectives of the Study

(1) To develop an ability to use learning media other than the text

to study a particular section of history.

(2) To develop an appreciation for historical books, historical novels, and biographies.

(3) To develop skill in the use of certain equipment that will enable the student to study by himself. This equipment would include tape recorders, filmstrip viewers, and record players.

(4) To develop desirable study habits, behavior patterns, and attitudes.

(5) To develop an ability to distinguish between fact and opinion.

The Procedure

On Monday, the teacher gives a brief preview of the chapter. This usually takes 15 or 20 minutes. The students will then finish the 40 minute period by starting to read the chapter. The students continue to read and study the chapter on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. By the end of the period on Tuesday, usually two or three of the students feel they have the chapter mastered. These students will then take a short 10 to 15 question readiness test. This objective type test is divided into sections covering vocabulary, important people, and the subject matter of the chapter.

After the student completes the test, he comes to the teacher's desk and corrects his own paper from the test key. If he shows weakness in a certain area or all areas, he returns to his individual study or a study group. Later in the week, when he feels he has his weakness overcome, he returns to the teacher who tries to determine his mastery of the materials by questions.

When the student demonstrates satisfactory mastery of the textbook, he is encouraged to listen to records, view filmstrips, listen to tapes, read picture encyclopedias, or other available enrichment materials such as: school library or classroom paperback library histories, biographies, and historical novels for the rest of the week, except for the time he requires to take the more comprehensive 30 to 40 question objective weekly final test on Friday.

The students also list what they have learned from the enrichment materials on the back of the test. The tests are corrected and discussed near the end of the period.

The tape recorder has proven to be a very valuable piece of equipment in this project. In addition to the fifteen purchased prepared tapes, it has been used to record student book reports and to record teacher lectures on the chapter being studied. The students have a choice of giving an oral book report, written report, or one on the tape recorder. About one-half of the students prefer to use the tape recorder. Four book reports are required of each student for the year, one report for each nine weeks. Several of the students have given more than the required four.

The teacher prepares and records a lecture on each chapter. This lecture on each chapter covers the vocabulary, important people, places and events. These tapes are made available to the students on the day before the tests. Most of the students listen to the taped lectures, but some feel they have mastered the material well enough by themselves and continue their individualized study.

All of the students keep a personal file of their work in a central file cabinet in the classroom. The following items are kept in their manila folders: tests, book reports, research papers, and student diaries. The student diaries are brought up to date near the end of the period each day.

In the small discussion groups, the students go over the questions at the end of the chapter, the vocabulary words, and the important people. When the small group is formulated, a secretary is appointed to record the main points of the discussion. These points are written on a form that has been prepared by the teacher and made accessible to the students by placing them in a folder in their file cabinet drawer.

One interesting observation has been the manner in which the groups have assembled at different times. On one day the groups will appear to be very

homogeneous and on another day very heterogeneous. Of course there are several students that study only with each other. It is seldom if ever that a very high ability student studies with a very low ability student, but when there is a group of four or five students together this combination will sometimes appear.

The teacher selects tapes, filmstrips, and records, for student use, that are closely correlated with the chapter that is being studied. In the event there is not a sufficient number of correlated records or filmstrips for the chapter, the student selects records or filmstrips that will enable him to review or preview the other chapters.

The equipment that is being used enables the students to listen to one of the three record players, or view one of the two filmstrip viewers, or study individually or in a small group. This can be done under the supervision of the teacher with a minimum of commotion in the room.

Summary of Related Research

The author has not read any procedure where this medium of learning has been utilized for individualizing the teaching of United States History.

Results of the Study

Because the author had each group for only one school year, he felt that the use of standardized tests for a measuring instrument would not be valid. He felt that the validity of day by day teacher observation of student attitude and growth would be much higher.

This teacher feels that each student has had a greater learning responsibility placed upon his shoulders. It is the opinion of the teacher that more students will do more work when given the opportunity to work within the framework of an individualized program. The better students are not held back by minimum group standards that are set in the strictly teacher-dominated classroom.

Most of the students use good study habits and make good use of their class time. Because they do use their time wisely, there is very little homework. Even without the homework the classes manage to cover thirty-one chapters in the textbook, and spend approximately four weeks working on a unit covering the framework of the federal government. Many of the students do read at least part of their library book assignments at home.

Comments from the students were solicited on a questionnaire prepared by the teacher. Some of the questions and responses are as follows:

Question: Do the related records give you a better understanding of the chapter being studied?

Responses:
(1) It tells the story of your chapter.
(2) The records helped me a lot.
(3) You understand more of or about the chapter.
(4) More information on certain men and dates.
(5) They give you information that isn't in the chapter.

Question: Do the related filmstrips give you a better understanding of the chapter being studied?

Responses:
(1) You can view what is going on the chapter.
(2) They are helpful by showing you pictures of things.
(3) It shows you more of what has happened.
(4) I think the filmstrips help you a lot more than the records.
(5) You can read and see what's happening.

Question: Do you usually have enough time to study the chapter during class time?

Responses:
(1) I do if I want to.
(2) Yes, if you use your time to study.
(3) I do almost all my studying in class.
(4) We have plenty of time to read the chapters and listen to the records too.
(5) I think more than a week would make it boring.

The answers received from the following question encouraged the teacher to proceed for another year with the individualized instruction.

Question: Have you enjoyed studying history more_____or less_____ the last fifteen chapters as compared to the first fifteen chapters?

Responses: (1) More. You can get a broader view with more outside materials.

(2) More. You can read and study at your own speed.

(3) More. Because it is a challenge.

(4) More. I like studying at your own rate. It helps me to know the chapter better.

(5) More. You get more out of it when you get to use more materials.

An interesting observation by this teacher has been the way the students have set study patterns for themselves. After a general exploring of the different available materials at the beginning of the year, most of the students became rather habitual in their study habits. Some have spent very little time doing anything other than reading either the text or paperbacks. Some have spent a great deal of time viewing filmstrips after they read the chapter. Others have spent most of their time reading the text and listening to records. A few students have turned to the picture encyclopedias for information in addition to the text.

Improvement Resulting From the Study

Individualizing the instruction of history by the use of technological devices and supplementary materials was relatively new to the Meeker Junior High School. For the author this experience was one of complete satisfaction.

After the first few weeks of school, students moved freely to all the sources of learning. Very little time was spent by the author in setting up tape recorders, filmstrips, or any other equipment. Even the checking out of paperback books became a simple task.

Students seemed anxious to use as many of the filmstrips and recordings

relating to the assigned work. Many students waited until the deadline before giving book reports, either oral or written; but since they had been given another option of giving them on the tape recorder, several more students were ahead of the deadline. After a student had recorded his report he usually played it back. This part of the procedure helped the student to become more aware of his spoken vocabulary and made him aware of how he sounds to others. Approximately one-half of the students in the history class use this method of giving book reports.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

One of the advantages of using an approach to teaching such as this lies in the opportunity of the able and ambitious students to cover an abundance of material in a relatively short period of time. This teacher has observed students viewing as many as four forty-eight frame filmstrips in one class period. On test days some of these same students were able to list as many as fifteen additional points that were not covered on the test.

Teacher judgment should be used in allowing poor students or disinterested students to participate in the enrichment part of the program. This teacher feels that most of the slow readers can obtain much valuable information from the records and filmstrips.

Grading becomes somewhat of a problem in an endeavor such as this. At the present time the following procedure has been followed. An objective type test is given at the end of each chapter. The percent score is determined and used as a base score. One point is given for each item the student has listed on the back of the test that has not been covered on a test question and that pertains to the chapter just studied. It is possible for a student to receive more than 100 points on a given test. It is also possible for a student to have a nine weeks average of more than 100. A 70-point average is still passing and a 93-point average is still an A.

It would be highly desirable to have teachers that are interested or engaged in similar teaching procedures to communicate with each other for the purpose of exchanging ideas or listing materials and equipment that have proven successful in their teaching experiences.

It is further recommended that the teacher and other staff members that are involved be constantly alert to any new or improved materials appearing on the market that could be useful in the program. The current "Life" picture encyclopedias that are in the process of being published could offer some interesting possibilities. Each volume is accompanied with a long-playing record. The district is in the process of purchasing this addition as it becomes available.

This teacher is satisfied with the cooperation and responsibility that was given by this year's history students. Their progress as measured by traditional testing methods was very satisfactory. Their growth as measured by the two Stanford Social Studies Achievement tests given at the beginning and the end of the year showed a class median growth of 13 months in grade placement for an 8-month period. Even though the class did satisfactory work, it is felt by the author that at the beginning of the year more time should be spent introducing and discussing the various enrichment materials and equipment. Perhaps the first chapter could be enriched by using several filmstrips related to the chapter. The parts of the filmstrip that are additional information to the chapter could be brought out by class discussion, and then have the students list these parts that they remembered on the back of the chapter test. A similar technique could be used with records for the next chapter, and picture encyclopedias for the next. It is the opinion of this teacher that this would be a better procedure than simply saying, "We have several sources of enrichment materials that are available to you after you have read the chapter."

APPENDIX I

Equipment and materials used in this project:

2	Viewlex previewers
2	Record players
1	Tape recorder
19	Sets of earphones
19	Volume controlled outlets
6	Individual study booths
1	Two drawer file cabinet
1	Set of Encyclopaedia Britannica Junior (15 volumes)
1	Set of Dictionary of American History (7 volumes)
1	Set of Album of American History (6 volumes)
1	Set of Pictorial Encyclopedia of American History (17 volumes)
1	Set of the Life History of the United States (12 volumes)
15	Volumes of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionaries
444	Various paperback books
75	Records
180	Filmstrips (historical)
18	Filmstrips (current event series published by the New York Times)
15	Prepared tapes

APPENDIX II

Cost Breakdown: Cost for materials used in the construction of the earphone panel.

Volume controls 5000 ohm	$ .69 each
Volume control plates	.21 each
Switch plates	.17 each
Jack outlets	.33 each
Control knobs	.48 each
100 feet of #22-2 shield wire	2.20 a roll
2 x 4 clear pine board	.50 bd. ft.